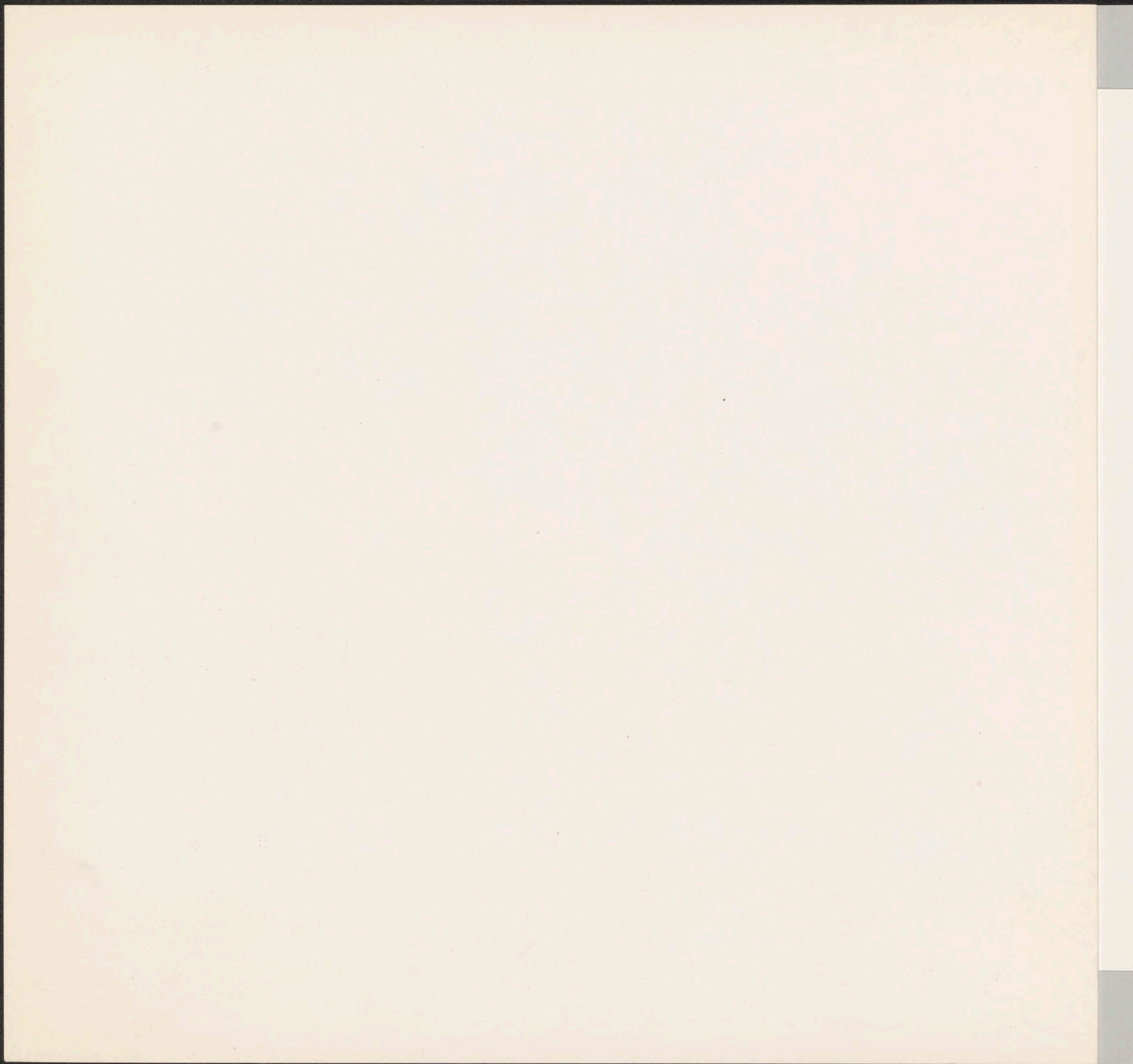




*Richard Caton Woodville*





## ERRATA

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### RICHARD CATON WOODVILLE

Photograph by Laura Lasinsky, Düsseldorf  
Collection of Mr. William Woodville, VIII  
(Caption Omitted)

In the work OLD '76 AND YOUNG '48, the old Revolutionary War veteran is probably the artist's great-uncle, Richard Caton, not the artist, as indicated in the text.

Catalogue No. 22, A CLASSICAL SCENE, should be titled THE WELCOME DRINK.

### Additions to the Exhibition:

MEXICAN NEWS, 1851

Engraving by Alfred Jones, 20½ x 18½

Collection of Mr. Theodore Stebbins

(To replace No. 18)

### SELF-PORTRAIT, 1841

Pencil drawing on paper, 11½ x 10

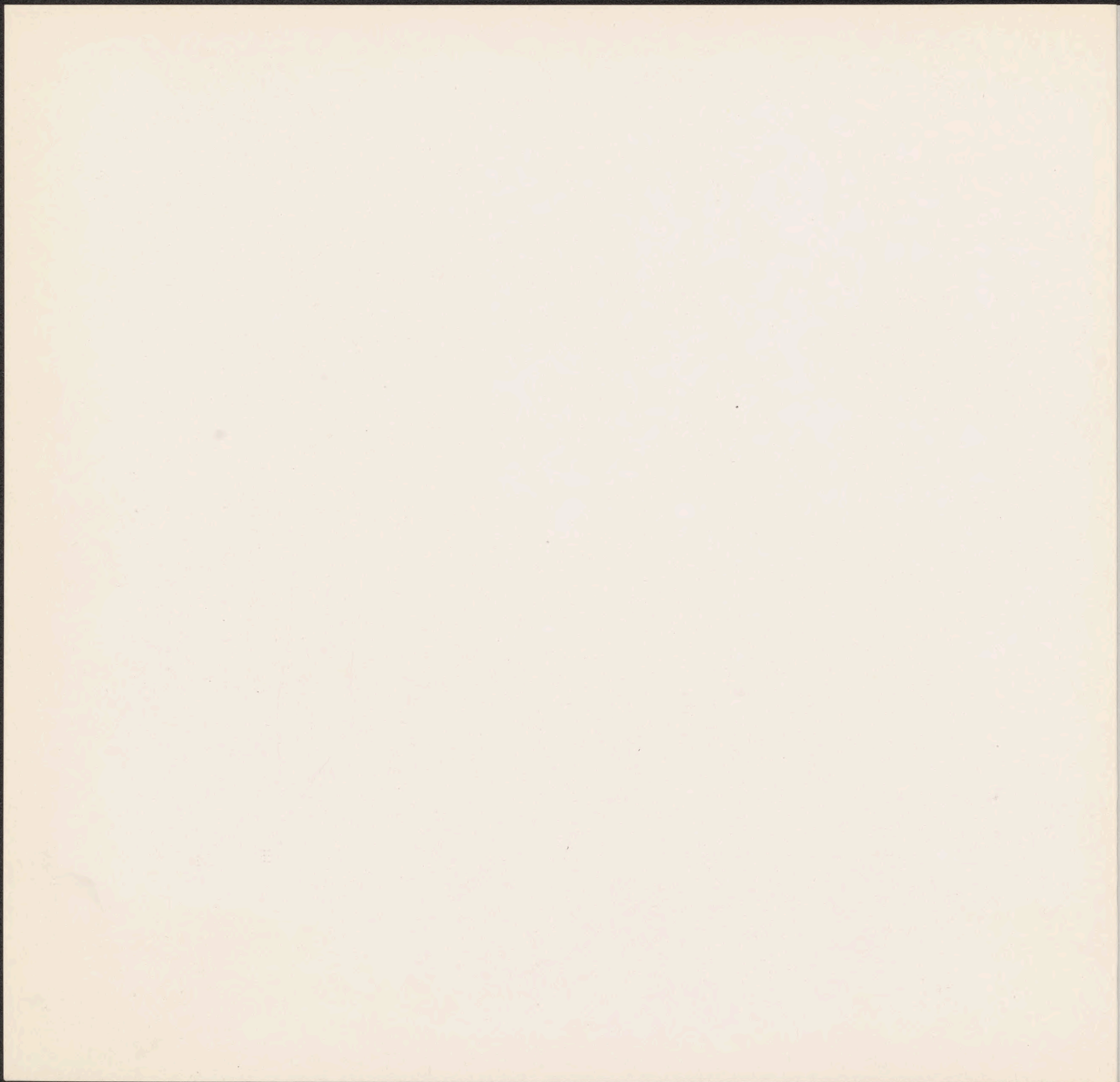
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Robert L. Graham

ton Woodville

ly American Genre Painter

The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.







# *Richard Caton Woodville*

an early American Genre Painter

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**Cover illustration**

*Waiting for the Stage*, 1851

The Corcoran Gallery of Art

Catalogue No.17



# *Richard Caton Woodville*

an early American Genre Painter

*April 21 – June 11, 1967*    The Corcoran Gallery of Art  
*Washington, D.C.*

*September 5 – October 5, 1967*    The Walters Art Gallery  
*Baltimore, Maryland*

*November 6 – December 10, 1967*    Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute  
*Utica, New York*

*January 5 – February 5, 1968*    The High Museum of Art  
*Atlanta, Georgia*

*March 5 – April 5, 1968*    The Brooklyn Museum  
*Brooklyn, New York*



## Foreword

This is the first exhibition ever accorded Richard Caton Woodville. It is one of a growing number of Corcoran exhibitions honoring the American artist. Others in recent years have included retrospective exhibitions of the work of John Singer Sargent, Childe Hassam, Albert Pinkham Ryder and William Ranney.

Richard Caton Woodville's place among America's major nineteenth-century genre painters has never been in doubt, yet over the years he has seldom been the subject of serious research. In the scattered references to him which have appeared, a good deal of misinformation about his life and career has been published. Early sources of information as to his life and work are scarce and meager in content. He apparently left no diary, no day book of his work, and few personal letters and notes have survived. He has even been confused with his son, Richard Caton Woodville, Jr, who gained recognition in England in the second half of the century as their best painter of military subjects.

Woodville arrived too late on the American scene to be included in William Dunlap's *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States* (1834), and was not sufficiently advanced in reputation to be mentioned by C. Edwards Lester in *The Artists of America* (1846) nor in Henry T. Tuckerman's *Book of the Artists* (1867).

While it is, perhaps, surprising that so little has been published about a member of one of Baltimore's more illustrious families, a number of individuals have, over the years, been involved in researching his life and work. They include William Pennington of Baltimore in 1879 and, in our time, the late Dr J. Hall Pleasants of Baltimore, Mary Bartlett Cowdrey, and Marvin C. Ross. The results of their basic investigations have been helpful.

We wish to extend our deepest thanks to Dr Francis Grubar for contributing the essay on Woodville, the most extensive and authoritative account of the artist to appear in print, and for making available his Doctoral thesis on Woodville to the Curator, James Harithas, who organized and installed the exhibition. It is through the generosity of the lenders to the exhibition that this first, long overdue, retrospective exhibition is possible. Especially in the case of Woodville, whose total life-time production was so small, was this cooperation vital to the realization of our goal.

I especially wish to thank Kathrine Dulin Folger, whose generosity in establishing The Kathrine Dulin Folger Publication Fund has contributed to the publication of this catalogue.

HERMANN WARNER WILLIAMS, JR  
*Director*  
The Corcoran Gallery of Art





LAURA LASINSKY

DÜSSELDORF.





*Seated Woman* c.1845-55  
Collection of Mr Kurt Versen  
Catalogue No.23





Dr Charles Frick 1845  
Maryland Historical Society  
Catalogue No.5

## Richard Caton Woodville 1825-1855

From its inception in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the American genre movement was a rather casual grouping of painters who specialized in certain situations or locales. Their common bond was one of subject matter and, to some extent, style and technique. William Sidney Mount was unquestionably the early leader. His keenly observed interpretations of rural Eastern scenes, painted with understanding and humor, became the professional yardstick for a number of excellent artists who flourished during the heyday of the movement in the eighteen-forties and fifties.

Among the more highly regarded members of this group was Richard Caton Woodville (1825-1855) from Baltimore,<sup>1</sup> whose characteristic, modest-sized efforts, painted in a precise, meticulous manner, represented the daily activities of the common man in urban America.

Woodville's artistic stature is predicated on a few well-known works. Included with these in the present exhibition are other works, some seen for the first time publicly, which not only justify the favorable past estimates, but necessitate a new appraisal of his position in the history of American art. At least a century overdue, this first one-man show of Woodville's work provides examples which figuratively speak for themselves. Even today, few can resist the magnetic appeal of these exquisite cabinet pieces painted by one of America's finest *Little Masters*.

Woodville's development may be divided into three periods: Baltimore, 1836-45; Düsseldorf, Germany, 1845-51; and, France and England, 1851-5.

Young Caton was a student at St Mary's College, Baltimore, one of the finest boys' schools in the area, when he painted the small watercolor *Battle Scene with Dying General*. Although a specific source has not been identified, the composition and general handling suggest a copy from a contemporary print or book illustration. It is quite a remarkable performance for an 11-year-old, and remains as the young artist's earliest dated work.

The sources of Woodville's art training are difficult to pinpoint. His first teacher may have been the English artist Samuel Smith, or perhaps Joseph Hewitt, both of whom gave drawing instruction at St Mary's during the eighteen-thirties. He may also have had instruction later from the Baltimore painter, Alfred Jacob Miller, best known today for his paintings of the West. As a member of one of Baltimore's distinguished families, Caton undoubtedly had access to private art collections in Baltimore, such as those of Thomas Edmondson and Robert Gilmor. The latter's collection, in particular, was noted for its Dutch and Flemish paintings, along with at least two genre paintings by William Sidney Mount.



Woodville's *Self-Portrait* (not in exhibition), drawn at age 16, exhibits his natural skill as a draughtsman. The sharp accenting throughout the costume is over-zealously depicted, but there are fine passages in the head and right side of the figure, indicating a developing consciousness of the possibilities of line. A friend later described the young artist as, ' . . . of aristocratic lineage, courtly manners and very handsome, he was essentially the artist. Possessed of remarkable perceptive faculties, both mental and physical, he was a keen observer of character, and such was his acuteness of sight that the minutest details were visible to him at some distance. His sense of humor was refined and he expressed dramatic situations with rare power of composition.'<sup>2</sup>

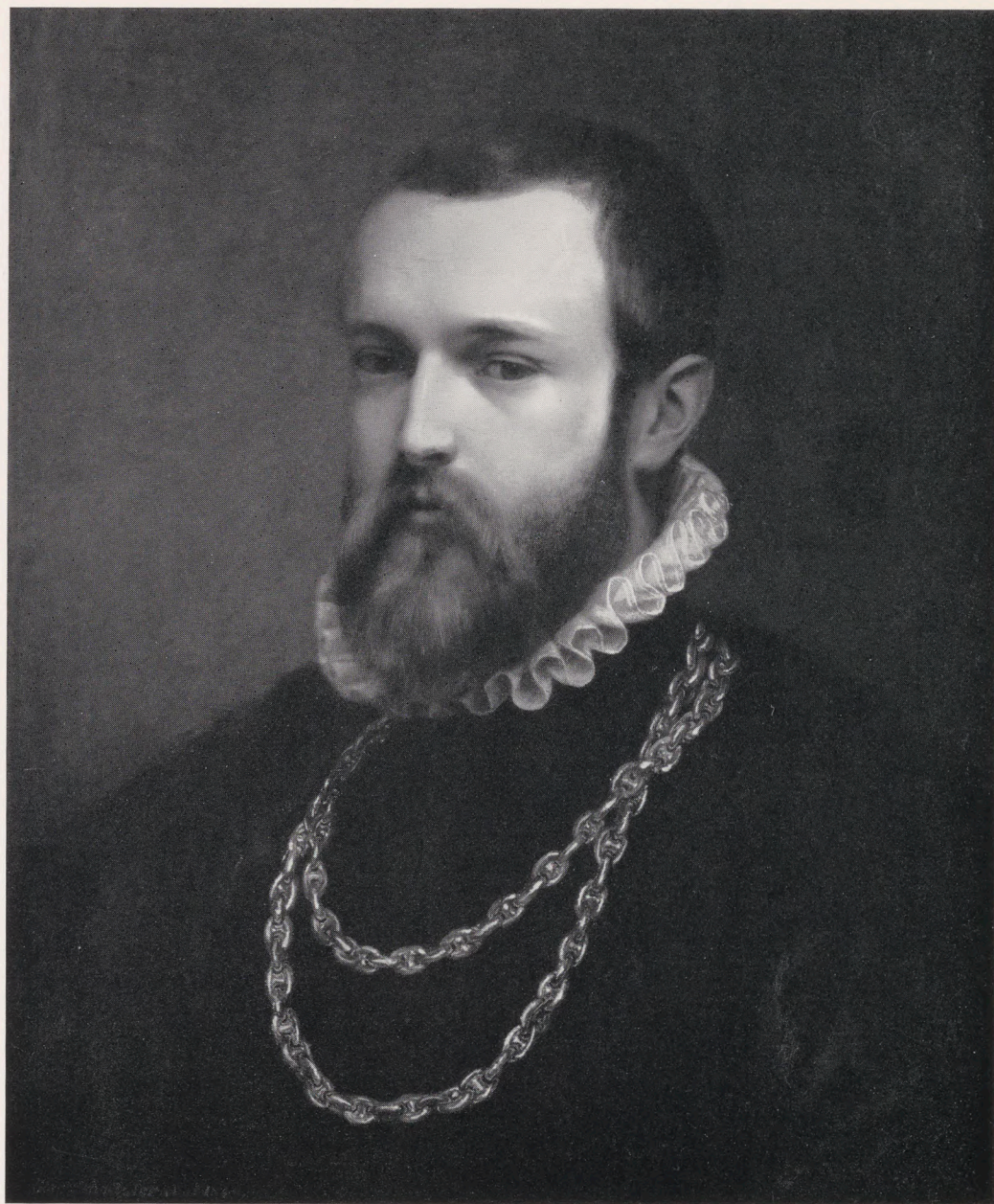
It is not clear whether Caton intended to follow an art career at this point in his life. If so, he may have experienced some difficulty in persuading his family of such an intention, for his name is next found among the roll of medical students registered at the University of Maryland for the 1842-3 session. Woodville's name did not appear in subsequent records, indicating that his medical aspirations were short-lived. More significantly, however, he produced a number of remarkable sketches of his teachers, fellow students and inmates of the Baltimore Almshouse which have been preserved in the *Dr Stedman R. Tilghman Scrapbook*.

Stedman R. Tilghman was undoubtedly a close friend of the artist, perhaps since 1838 when both were pupils at St Mary's College. Born on March 1 1822, of the famous Eastern Shore family, Stedman received his M.D. from the University of Maryland in 1843. The same year he accompanied Sir William Drummond Stewart's last expedition to the Rocky Mountains. Tilghman died on July 28 1848, after serving in the Mexican War. His *Scrapbook* contains a rather curious assortment of personal souvenirs including a number of newspaper clippings, autographs, a theater notice, a beaver tail, engravings, and twenty-five pencil, pen, and watercolor sketches, nineteen of which were done by Woodville.

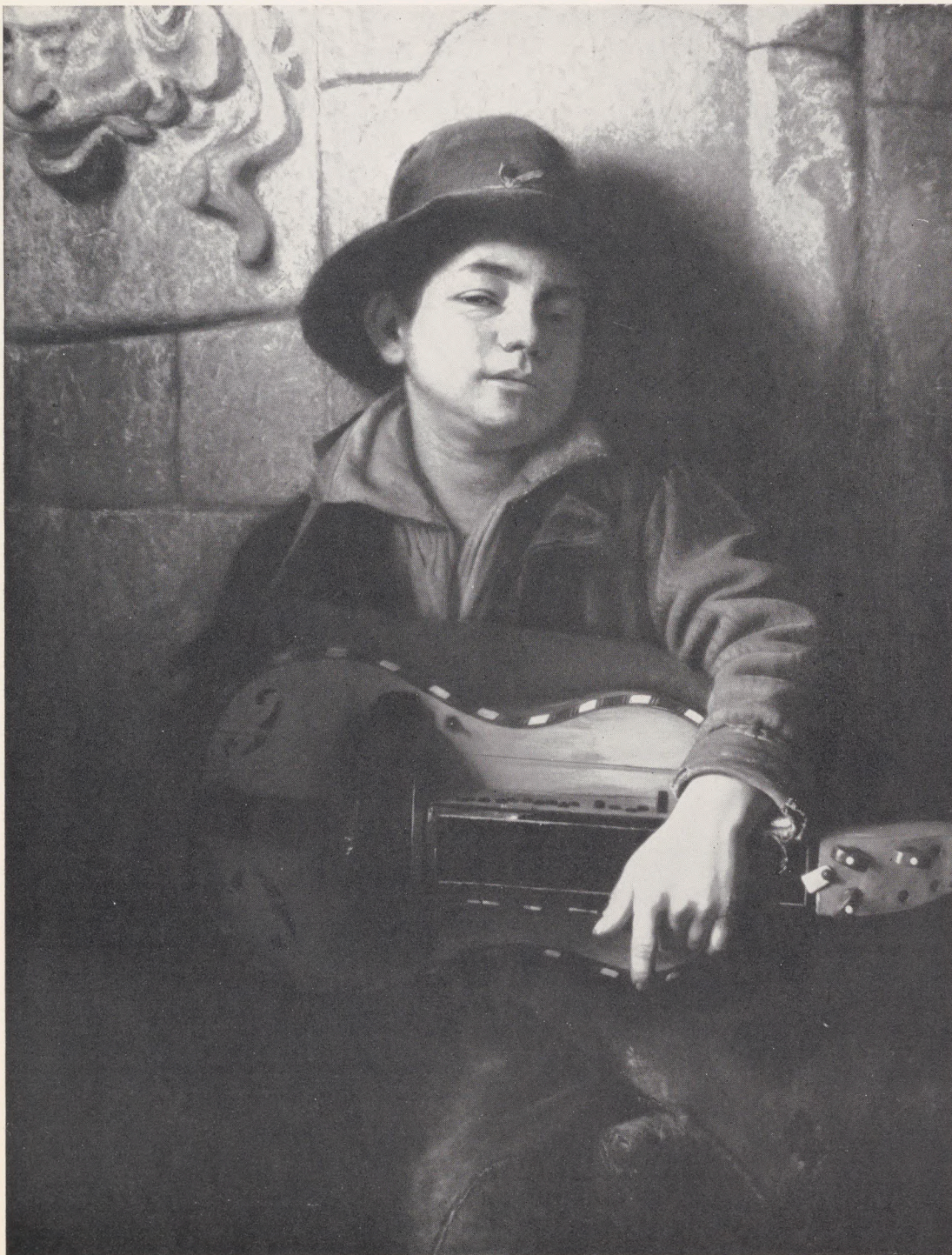
Since the *Scrapbook* pages are bound in one volume, only two of Woodville's drawings can be displayed in this exhibition. The vivid pencil sketch of *Dr Nathaniel Potter*, doubtlessly executed during the course of a lecture, exhibits an assuredness and technical precision more advanced and controlled than Woodville's earlier efforts. The linear brevity recalls Ingres' methods, and, like some of the French master's work, was probably conceived as an entity in itself and not as a preparatory sketch. The venerable, 72-year-old Professor Potter, one of the staunchest supporters of the University of Maryland since its inception earlier in the century, was caught in a characteristic pose at the twilight of his career. Cordell described him as, ' . . . of medium height, of full figure and ruddy complexion. He was fond of cards and given to swearing'. He varied the tedium of his lectures by anecdotes which often brought down the house. Some of these taxed even the credulity of the



Antoinette Schnitzler Woodville  
*Portrait of Richard Caton Woodville in  
XVI Century Costume 1849*  
Collection of Mr Kurt Versen  
Catalogue No.25







*The Italian Boy with Hurdy Gurdy*  
1852 Collection of Mr and Mrs  
George C. Doub  
Catalogue No.19



students, who would express their skepticism by ahems, ohos, by whistling and in other ways. To these he would reply by saying, 'I'm d—d, gentlemen, if it ain't so'.<sup>3</sup>

The brief but powerful drawing of *Dr Frick*, unsigned but identified and dated in Tilghman's handwriting, is particularly effective, representing the brilliant young physician on the threshold of a promising career.

The carefully painted watercolor, *Soldier's Experience*, initialed and dated, May 1844, has the singular importance of being the earliest located painting bearing the unmistakable Woodville genre stamp. A contemporary room interior within a stage-box type setting, acute and meticulous attention to detail, and the warm human sentiment generated by the attentive rapport of the figures are characteristics which appear consistently throughout his paintings of the American scene. The subject was probably inspired by events in the struggle between Texas and Mexico from 1836 to 1845. Opaque watercolor was applied in the figures and other foreground objects; the heads are painted with the precision of a miniaturist. Crisp glints of yellow and white for the highlights and black or brown in the darker areas provide sharp, tense accents. The method is not unlike that employed by Alfred Jacob Miller in some of his watercolors. A brownish wash was utilized in the background with several excellent, fluid passages visible in the framed picture on the wall and the soft shadows cast by the various objects. Ample evidence of pencil work is perceptible through the semi-transparent wash areas. Apparently Woodville conceived his pencil technique here not only as a means of outlining the general contours of the composition, but as an integral part of the finished painting. His pencil-marks remained visible to give further definition where necessary. Similar treatment may be seen in the *Man with Umbrella and Carpet Bag, Holding a Child*, dated 1848. The *Soldier's Experience* is mounted on cardboard and appears to have been trimmed. Some five years later, in Düsseldorf, Woodville made this work the basis for his more elaborate and highly successful oil painting, *Old '76 and Young '48*.

Woodville received his first major recognition as an artist in the spring of 1845 when his oil painting, *Scene in a Bar-room* (present location unknown), was exhibited in the *Twentieth Annual Exhibition of the National Academy of Design* and purchased by the New York art patron Abraham Cozzens. However, only two examples in oil by Woodville have been located from this period. One is the portrait of the artist's great-uncle, *Richard Caton* (the son-in-law of Charles Carroll of Carrollton), probably painted in 1844 or shortly before. A competent enough painting for this stage of the young artist's *œuvre*, its rather harsh modeling and dryness of manner are indicative of the deficiencies in Woodville's technique before he studied in Europe, if one compares it with, for example, the sensitive qualities in his later portrait of *Mrs William Fridge Murdoch*.



*Mrs William Fridge Murdoch*  
1851 Collection of Mrs  
John W. Jackson  
Catalogue No.16





*The Card Players* 1846  
The Detroit Institute of Arts  
Catalogue No.7



A recently discovered letter written by William Woodville, the artist's father, indicates that Caton married his childhood sweetheart, Mary Theresa Buckler, on January 3 1845, without the knowledge or consent of his family. His success with the National Academy of Design exhibition several months later undoubtedly influenced the family's decision that he should study art in Europe, although the original plan specified Italy rather than Düsseldorf.

Located on the Rhine, Düsseldorf was a pleasant and picturesque city in the mid-nineteenth century, judging from contemporary descriptions. Under the directorship of Wilhelm von Schadow, the Düsseldorf Academy had developed into an impressive international art center by the time the Woodvilles arrived in 1845.

Richard Caton Woodville's fine, precise draughtsmanship undoubtedly met with some approval in Düsseldorf. His ready adjustment to the rigorous Academy manner may be seen in the pencil and white chalk drawings on tinted paper of a *Seated Woman* and *The Knight and the Scribe*, the latter dated 1852.

Woodville was a student at the Academy for about a year, then he studied privately under Carl Ferdinand Sohn for the remainder of his stay in Germany.



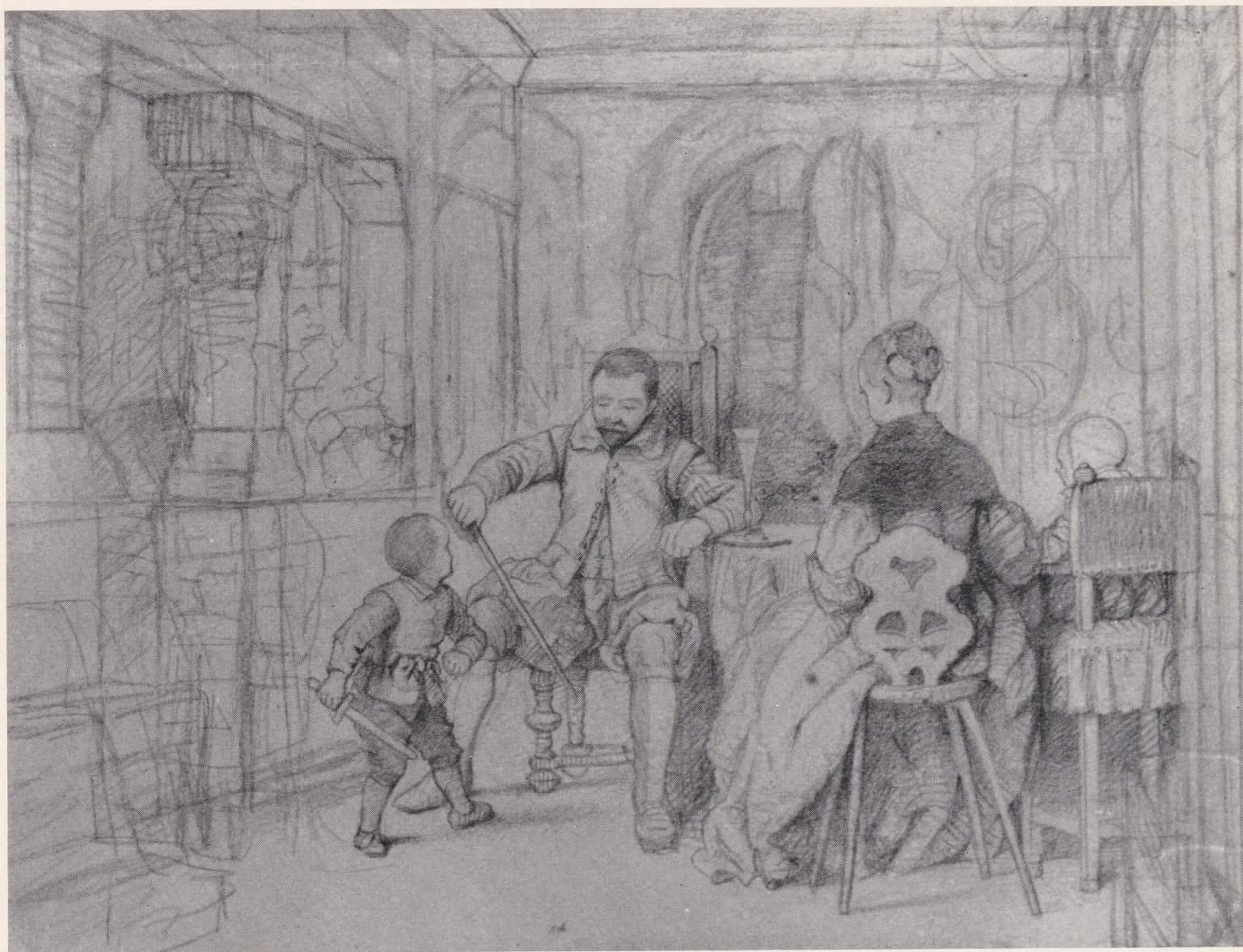
Sohn was a professor at the Academy and was considered an excellent portraitist with a good color sense. It was in these surroundings that Woodville met Antoinette Schnitzler, also a private student under Sohn, who eventually married Woodville after his separation from Mary Theresa. Antoinette also profited from Sohn's tutelage. Her romantic *Portrait of Richard Caton Woodville in XVI Century Costume* and the strong *Profile Study of the Artist* (not in exhibition) in contemporary attire were painted with skill and understanding.

Woodville's efforts through the remaining years may be grouped into three major subject matter areas: contemporary American scene genre; romantic genre utilizing themes and settings of the past; and portraiture. His progress in genre paintings became better known in America through the agency of the American Art Union. From 1847 he was a regular and popular contributor to the Union until the sudden end of that institution in 1852. *The Card Players*, painted in 1846, was received with enthusiasm in America and certainly its success was an incentive to continue to interpret the contemporary scene. He could now look forward with some assurance to a ready market for future productions in a similar style. Some indication of the popularity of *The Card Players* may be seen in a brief note in *The Literary World* for November 30 1850, which stated that Woodville's painting '... numbers its admirers by thousands. All frequenters of the gallery have been familiar with it ...' After 1850, when prints after this painting were made from the engraving by Charles Burt and distributed to the 16,310 members of the Art Union for that year, the circle of Woodville admirers unquestionably increased.

A recently discovered preliminary drawing for *The Card Players* demonstrates how the basic idea was carried over into the finished painting with remarkable consistency. Yet the slight changes reveal a calculated and precise adjustment which resulted in a more successful effect in the painting. Subtle psychological alterations may be noted in the main figures. The two characters on the right seem somewhat sinister in the drawing, and the older man appears to be their weak and rather pathetic victim, with the Negro servant looking on sadly. The character of the older man is strengthened and he assumes an aggressive attitude, while the Negro regards the argument with a sly humor. Also, in the painting, the card sharper on the right has an extra card jutting out from his chair seat.

*The Cavalier's Return*, painted in 1847, illustrates Woodville's approach to romantic genre. It was the young artist's most ambitious undertaking up to this point, presenting a new and highly successful departure in composition and lighting. The stage-box design is tilted obliquely toward the left, making the far wall appear diagonal to the picture plane instead of parallel to it. Further depth is suggested by the glimpse of sky and foliage through the windows, an unusual effect in a Woodville





*The Fencing Lesson* c.1847-9  
Collection of Mr William Woodville, VIII  
Catalogue No.12



painting. The organization of the architecture and various still life objects has an almost geometric logic and precision, yet does not detract from the warm, human appeal of the intimate domestic scene. It is incredible how closely Woodville has captured the spirit of the seventeenth-century Dutch style. The back-lighting with its effective silhouetting of the figures is reminiscent of a de Hooch, while the rendering of fabrics recalls Ter Borch.

Woodville is known to have included portraits of family members and friends as some of the figures in his compositions. Although no positive evidence exists regarding the identity of the three figures in *The Cavalier's Return*, it is tempting to suggest that this picture had such a personal reference for Woodville. A comparison between the figure of the cavalier in this work and that in *The Fencing Lesson*, a drawing associated with the painting, and the various known studies, self-portraits and photographs of Woodville indicate enough resemblance to the artist to make this supposition feasible.

Accounts in the contemporary press reflect continued admiration for Woodville's work, although *The Cavalier's Return* marked a new approach in the artist's style. Woodville completed another successful romantic genre painting in 1850, *The Game of Chess* (not in exhibition). The artist's *Old Woman and Child Reading a Book* with its muted tonality and seventeenth-century costumes may also be included within this category.

The extent to which German romantic literary forms may have influenced aspects of Woodville's style is not certain. The absence of specific references to such sources in his work, the lack of personal correspondence, journal and diary notes or conclusive anecdotes of acquaintances, leaves a void which can only be explored on the basis of the visual material itself. It is most unlikely, however, that a person of Woodville's education and background would have remained impervious to the rich cultural atmosphere of Düsseldorf during his six years' stay there. Perhaps when Woodville sketched his later version of *Knight and Scribe* he envisioned the second stanza from Ludwig Uhland's *The Legend of the Critic*.

'Stead of sword, a pen well-sharpened

Draws he forth, prepared for fight;

Spectacles, in place of visor,

Serve to guard his book-dimmed sight.<sup>4</sup>

An inscription on the reverse of the drawing: 'R. Caton Woodville to F. B. Mayer, Baltimore - 15 May 1854' is an indication of the possible date of one of Woodville's two visits home. Frank B. Mayer was a Baltimore artist and friend of Woodville.

Woodville's more sketchily executed, but powerful drawing, *A Classical Scene*, may refer to Bragi, the son of Odin and god of poetry in northern mythology, who is usually represented as an elderly man with long, white hair and beard, playing a





*Politics in an Oyster House*  
1848 The Walters Art  
Gallery  
Catalogue No.10





*Man with an Umbrella and Carpetbag,  
Carrying a Child 1848*  
The Walters Art Gallery  
Catalogue No.9



golden harp. Again, it must be stressed that these statements are extremely speculative, pending more definitive evidence. However, the emphasis here is not on the content of the specific literary sources cited so much as the spirit and mood which the works convey, and from that point of view alone Woodville's romantic work reflected most certainly the essence of the Düsseldorf approach.

Although Woodville must have been interested in the problems of portraiture, there is little evidence that he ever practised it professionally. Most of his works in this category were either romantic costume pieces or the more realistic, contemporary renderings of members of his family, friends, or himself. An exception may be the sensitive characterization of a handsome, middle-aged woman, Mrs William Fridge Murdoch, painted in 1851. The deftly executed, warm flesh tones and fur coat are effectively contrasted against a cooler background. Her sidelong turn of the head toward the right, glancing downward, suggests a pensive, reflective mood. Woodville's miniature-like technique in the smaller heads of his multi-figure compositions lost none of its power and skill when enlarged in a single portrait of this type. There can be little question that a successful career in portraiture awaited him had he chosen to pursue this line of endeavor.

The portrait of the artist's brother, *William Woodville VI* (not in exhibition), is a less complete example of Woodville's late style. The painting surface is badly crackled and certain areas, such as the barely suggested ear, support the belief of the Woodville family that the artist began the work during his last visit to Baltimore (c. 1854), and when called back to Europe because of the illness of his wife, his promise to finish the painting on his return was never fulfilled.

The full impact of Woodville's Düsseldorf training is evident in the masterful genre portrait, *The Italian Boy with Hurdy Gurdy*. A recent cleaning has disclosed the date 1852; the high degree of technical virtuosity clearly establishes this work as a major example of the artist's later period. Strangely enough, the painting was never exhibited publicly. The earliest documentation appeared in 1879.<sup>5</sup> Little was known about the painting until the early nineteen-fifties, when it was sent to The Walters Art Gallery for examination, at which time Marvin C. Ross identified the painter and the subject.

Along with his work in the romantic manner and his portraiture, Woodville continued to paint characteristic scenes of American life. An extensive exhibition record and numerous bibliographical citations give ample evidence of the popularity accorded Woodville's *War News from Mexico*, probably his best known work. Painted in 1848, it was purchased by a member of the American Art Union Management Committee and exhibited in their gallery the following year.

Though the setting of the work is out of doors, the compact porch, the tight



grouping of eleven people, and treatment of exterior light give little effect of any additional spaciousness which might be expected from this change of scene. Perhaps Woodville's intention in utilizing a shallow, parallel plane with crowded figures was to intensify the varying degrees of reaction to the war news. Assuredly, the individual characterizations are of high merit, and the paint quality as precise and fine as in his previous works. According to Woodville family tradition, the elderly man seated at the right is said to be a posthumous portrait of the artist's great-uncle, Richard Caton. Miss Maria Johnson of Baltimore, who accompanied the artist and his wife to Europe in 1845, is the figure in the open window at the right. Two engravings were made from the painting by Alfred Jones for the American Art Union; the larger folio engraving, measuring  $20\frac{1}{2}$  by  $18\frac{1}{2}$  inches, is considered to be among the finer examples of American graphic work produced during that period. Some 14,000 impressions were printed and distributed to the Art Union subscribers of 1851.<sup>6</sup>

Woodville employed a similar shallow stage-box organization with more effective results in another painting of 1848. *Politics in an Oyster House* ranks clearly among the artist's best efforts. The symmetrical design in the Renaissance manner in which vertical architectural members are used as framing devices at either side, horizontals above and below, and the pyramidal arrangement of the figures at the center, recalls *War News from Mexico*, even to the simple architectural style of the piers and capitals. The basic difference between the two paintings, other than the fact that one takes place indoors, is the simpler, coherent design of *Politics in an Oyster House*. A more discriminating use of open space around the carefully depicted objects results in a stronger monumental effect, and the unique Woodville blend of sharp, incisive highlight passages with a softer mellow treatment of the subdued light and cast shadow areas exhibit both the power and subtlety of the artist.

The psychological rapport established between the two protagonists is thoroughly convincing. Little of the over-staged, theatrical quality which appears occasionally in other works is evident in this fine genre effort. It appears that Woodville was consciously recreating the situation described by Dickens some six years earlier, when the visiting Englishman noted '... of all eaters of fish, or flesh, or fowl, in these latitudes, the swallowers of oysters are not gregarious; but subduing themselves, as it were, to the nature of what they work in, and copying the coyness of the thing they eat, do sit apart in curtained boxes, and consort by twos, not by two hundreds'.<sup>7</sup>

The situation in *Politics in an Oyster House* is not unlike that of Woodville's earlier painting of *The Card Players*. In both cases, the older men are potential victims of aggressive urban characters. Yet the action is hardly one-sided, and there is





*War News from Mexico* 1848  
National Academy of Design  
Catalogue No. 11





*Old Woman and Child Reading a Book*  
 (date unknown)  
 Collection of Mrs Gordon Callender  
 Catalogue No.24



*Old '76 and Young '48* 1849  
 The Walters Art Gallery  
 Catalogue No.13



considerable doubt over any successful outcome on the part of the belligerent factions. The elder card player displays an attitude of some strength in questioning his opponent, while the older gentleman seated in the booth remains unconvinced by the argument of the oyster cellar critic. Thus a tension is created which allows the viewer to draw his own conclusions regarding the outcome. A favorite symbol of Woodville, almost a signature in his contemporary genre interiors, is the inclusion of a red cuspidor. This device, coupled with the cigar remains on a littered floor, is obviously an allusion toward the use of tobacco prevalent at that time.

Another American interior scene with figures was completed by Woodville in Düsseldorf in 1849. *Old '76 and Young '48* is related to the watercolor, *Soldier's Experience*, painted in Baltimore in 1844. A comparison of the two paintings establishes the artist's knowledge of composition learned at Düsseldorf. The compressed design of the watercolor may be contrasted to the spacious design within the setting of the room in the oil painting, with a more interesting oblique movement of the wall on the left. The major figures are grouped in his usual pyramidal arrangement at the center, with subordinate figures and a partially open door at the right background. Even with a consideration of the difference in media, the most significant indication of Woodville's artistic progress was the obvious improvement in his painting technique, particularly in the sophistication of his modeling. It is perhaps this feature and his advance in color sense which separate Woodville from native trained American genre painters.

This work was also sent to the American Art Union in New York and when Walt Whitman visited their gallery in 1850, he remarked that, 'The exhibition of the Art Union is now open, with its new pictures – all spack (*sic*) and span, and shining, in their handsome frames. There is a pleasant piece here, painted in a very subdued manner, by Woodville, called *Old '76 and Young '48* . . . The mother and the old '76er are beautifully done; the whole picture is good, and free from that straining after effect, whose attempt is too evident (that's the fault), which mars most of the pictures here'.<sup>8</sup>

*Old '76 and Young '48* offers another example of the use of family members as characters in Woodville's paintings. Family tradition states that the artist is the old Revolutionary War veteran. The middle-aged couple are the artist's parents, while the young woman is probably the artist's sister, Dorothea Anne. The youthful soldier would be the younger brother of the artist, Myddelton Woodville. If these assumptions are valid, one can only conclude that Richard Caton Woodville must have had a number of family sketches with him in Germany. However, nothing of this nature has yet come to light. Technically, Woodville's *Old '76 and Young '48* demonstrates the gradual relaxation of the meticulous manner seen in *The Card Players* and *War News from Mexico*. A velvet-like softness appears



*Knight and Scribe* 1852  
Baltimore Museum of Art  
Catalogue No.20



*Battle Scene with Dying General* 1836  
Collection of Mrs Gordon Callender  
Catalogue No.1





in the flesh tones, but with little loss in strength, and the textural highlights and shadows are beautifully rendered.

Thematically closer to *The Card Players*, *Waiting for the Stage*<sup>9</sup> was painted in Paris in 1851 during Woodville's visit in the French city after his departure from Düsseldorf. *The Card Players* utilizes a symmetrical balance in the grouping of the figures, while in *Waiting for the Stage* the figures are shifted, and there is a definite asymmetrical movement of the floor and side walls. Accessory details are numerous in both paintings, but in the earlier work their spacing is more contrived. The somewhat strained, concentrated intensity on the play of cards in the 1846 painting is replaced by a casual, almost nonchalant air in the later work. While the individual objects in each painting are studied with equal care, the color effect is warmer in *The Card Players*; *Waiting for the Stage* exhibits a new, cooler tonality with less clarity.

Woodville's *The Sailor's Wedding* was perhaps his most ambitious effort in organizing groups of figures within a controlled space. Completed in 1852, it was the artist's last major American genre work. Each figure is a masterpiece of carefully studied characterization, from the jaunty stance of the sailor, the demure attitude of his bride, the compromising pose of the best man, the sharp annoyance of the magistrate, and the somewhat decrepit and worried parents. Woodville's precisionist manner is still evident in each accessory item. The old hair trunk and books on the floor provide a still life study with an acuity worthy of a Harnett. It is in the rendition of the main characters, however, and in the pervading atmospheric light that Woodville employs the color subtleties of his European training. The treatment of the group in the doorway with the view of a Baltimore street beyond demonstrates the extent to which he might carry his less distinct, more suggestive manner. It is quite possible that Woodville was developing a new stylistic direction at the time of his sudden death.

As an expatriate American artist in Europe during most of his career, Woodville shunned public notoriety in favor of a secluded existence. A few facts have filtered through from letters he wrote to the American Art Union or accounts of friends, but, for the most part, his personality remains obscure. Until recently, confusion existed as to the date and cause of his death. His death certificate has now been located and states officially that he died on August 13 1855, at No.65 Stanhope Street, London, of '... poisonous effects of an overdose of morphia, medicinally taken. Accidental death, P.M'.<sup>10</sup> Woodville was buried in Highgate Cemetery London, leaving an unfinished painting on his easel, *The Burial at Sea*.

FRANCIS S. GRUBAR

The George Washington University





*The Sailor's Wedding* 1852  
The Walters Art Gallery  
Catalogue No.21



*Soldier's Experience* 1844  
The Walters Art Gallery  
Catalogue No.4



*A Classical Scene* c.1845-55  
Collection of Mr Kurt Versen  
Catalogue No.22







*The Cavalier's Return* 1847  
The New-York Historical Society  
Catalogue No.8



## Lenders to the Exhibition

Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, Maryland  
Mrs Gordon Callender, Mont St Hilaire, Quebec, Canada  
The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.  
The Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, Michigan  
Mr and Mrs George C. Doub, Baltimore, Maryland  
Mrs John W. Jackson, Arlington, Virginia  
The Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.  
Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland  
National Academy of Design, New York, New York  
The New-York Historical Society, New York, New York  
Mr Kurt Versen, Tenafly, New Jersey  
The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, Maryland  
Mr William Woodville, VIII, Washington, D.C.



# Catalogue of the Exhibition

Dimensions given are in inches, height before width

**1** BATTLE SCENE WITH DYING GENERAL, 1836  
watercolor on paper,  $10\frac{1}{4} \times 13\frac{1}{2}$   
Collection of Mrs Gordon Callender

**2** DR NATHANIEL POTTER, 1842  
pencil drawing on paper,  $6\frac{1}{2} \times 4$   
Maryland Historical Society (from *The Dr*  
*Stedman R. Tilghman Scrapbook*)

**3** DR ADOLPHUS L. HEERMAN, 1843  
pencil drawing on paper,  $9\frac{3}{4} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$   
Maryland Historical Society (from *The Dr*  
*Stedman R. Tilghman Scrapbook*)

**4** SOLDIER'S EXPERIENCE, 1844  
watercolor on paper,  $10\frac{3}{4} \times 11\frac{3}{4}$   
The Walters Art Gallery

**5** DR CHARLES FRICK, 1845  
pencil drawing on paper,  $9\frac{3}{4} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$   
Maryland Historical Society (from *The Dr*  
*Stedman R. Tilghman Scrapbook*)

**6** CARD PLAYERS, c.1845-6  
pencil drawing on paper,  $12 \times 10$   
Collection of Mr Kurt Versen

**7** THE CARD PLAYERS, 1846  
oil on canvas,  $18\frac{1}{2} \times 25$   
The Detroit Institute of Arts

**8** THE CAVALIER'S RETURN, 1847  
oil on canvas,  $28\frac{1}{2} \times 30$   
The New-York Historical Society

**9** MAN WITH AN UMBRELLA AND CARPETBAG,  
CARRYING A CHILD, 1848  
watercolor and pencil on paper,  $6\frac{1}{8} \times 5\frac{1}{8}$   
The Walters Art Gallery

**10** POLITICS IN AN OYSTER HOUSE, 1848  
oil on canvas,  $16 \times 13$   
The Walters Art Gallery

**11** WAR NEWS FROM MEXICO, 1848  
oil on canvas,  $27 \times 24$   
National Academy of Design

**12** THE FENCING LESSON, c.1847-9  
pencil drawing on paper,  $7\frac{1}{2} \times 10\frac{1}{2}$   
Collection of Mr William Woodville, VIII



**13** OLD '76 AND YOUNG '48, 1849  
oil on canvas,  $21 \times 26\frac{1}{2}$   
The Walters Art Gallery

**14** POLITICS IN AN OYSTER-HOUSE, c.1851  
lithograph by Michele Fanoli,  $21\frac{1}{2} \times 16\frac{1}{2}$   
The Library of Congress

**15** CORNERED, 1851  
lithograph by Christian Schultz,  $19\frac{3}{4} \times 22\frac{3}{4}$   
The Library of Congress

**16** MRS WILLIAM FRIDGE MURDOCH, 1851  
oil on canvas,  $30 \times 25$   
Collection of Mrs John W. Jackson

**17** WAITING FOR THE STAGE, 1851  
oil on canvas,  $15 \times 18\frac{1}{2}$   
The Corcoran Gallery of Art  
Purchase: Gallery Fund, William A. Clark  
Fund, and through the gifts of Mr and Mrs  
Lansdell K. Christie and Orme Wilson

**18** MEXICAN NEWS, 1851  
engraving by Alfred Jones,  $23 \times 18\frac{1}{2}$   
The Corcoran Gallery of Art  
Gift of Mr Donald Webster

**19** THE ITALIAN BOY WITH HURDY GURDY,  
1852  
oil on canvas,  $36 \times 27\frac{3}{4}$   
Collection of Mr and Mrs George C. Doub

**20** KNIGHT AND SCRIBE, 1852  
pencil and white chalk on grey paper,  $7\frac{1}{4} \times 7\frac{1}{4}$   
Baltimore Museum of Art

**21** THE SAILOR'S WEDDING, 1852  
oil on canvas,  $18\frac{1}{8} \times 22$   
The Walters Art Gallery

**22** A CLASSICAL SCENE, c.1845-55  
pencil drawing on paper,  $12 \times 10$   
Collection of Mr Kurt Versen

**23** SEATED WOMAN, c.1845-55  
pencil and white chalk on grey paper,  $12 \times 10$   
Collection of Mr Kurt Versen

**24** OLD WOMAN AND CHILD READING A BOOK  
(date unknown)  
oil on canvas,  $12 \times 14$   
Collection of Mrs Gordon Callender

**25** Antoinette Schnitzler Woodville  
PORTRAIT OF RICHARD CATON WOODVILLE IN  
XVI CENTURY COSTUME, 1849  
oil on canvas,  $25\frac{1}{4} \times 20\frac{1}{4}$   
Collection of Mr Kurt Versen



## Bibliography

- 1 A definitive publication on Richard Caton Woodville, with the collaboration of Marvin C. Ross, is forthcoming. In addition to all the lenders of works to this exhibition, the author wishes to express his particular gratitude for the generous assistance given by the artist's descendants, Mr Kurt Versen and Mr William Woodville, VIII.
- 2 *The Sun*, Supplement, Baltimore, November 15 1881, p.1.
- 3 EUGENE F. CORDELL, *Historical Sketch of The University Of Maryland, School Of Medicine, 1807-1890* (Baltimore, 1891), p.109.
- 4 LUDWIG UHLAND, *The Songs and Ballads of Uhland*, trans. W. W. Skeat (London, 1864), p.249.
- 5 Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, *Pennington Papers MS.*, June 13 1879.
- 6 The small engraving, not included in this exhibition, measures  $6\frac{1}{4} \times 6\frac{1}{4}$  inches, and appeared in *The American Art Union Bulletin* for April 1 1851. Impressions from the same plate are found later in the gift album, *The Ornaments of Memory*, published in 1855-6, New York.
- 7 CHARLES DICKENS, *American Notes and Pictures From Italy* (New York, 1901), p.73.
- 8 ROLLO G. SILVER, 'Whitman in 1850: Three Uncollected Articles', *American Literature* (January 1948), XIX, p.305.
- 9 See FRANCIS S. GRUBAR, 'Richard Caton Woodville's *Waiting for the Stage*', *The Corcoran Bulletin* (1963), XIII, pp.10-14.
- 10 Certified copy of an entry of death, Richard Caton Woodville, died August 13 1855, District of Saint Pancras, Sub-District of the Regents Park, Middlesex, England. General Register Office, Somerset House, London, January 29 1953, No.109140.

### Photography credits

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